



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Chester L. Cooper
Director, International and Social
Studies Division
Institute for Defense Analyses
400 Army-Navy Drive
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Dear Chet:

Thank you for sending me the manuscript of your article on intelligence and the policymaker. As you suggest in your letter, I do have problems with the last three pages in which you propose changes to increase the influence of intelligence in policymaking, especially the influence of the Office and Board of National Estimates.

As one solution to the problem you see, you suggest that "appropriate Board members accompany the Director of Central Intelligence to higher policy councils and to represent the Agency (or the intelligence community as a whole) in consequential, subordinate forums". I believe you are obviously out of touch with the current procedures. Senior substantive officers from the Agency do participate at all stages of the NSC process in the preparation of responses to NSSMs, and I am usually accompanied by a senior substantive officer when I attend meetings of the NSC and its subordinate groups. I select these officers on the basis of their substantive competence from within the Agency. Sometimes, but not always, they are members of the Board of National Estimates. I feel that the kind of direct intelligence participation you suggest is now being furnished in this way.

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You also suggest another solution--that the Board of National Estimates be removed from the Agency and be made directly subordinate to the National Security Council. The reason you give is to provide "the best possible first-hand intelligence judgments on critical international problems". I do not agree that such a transfer would be the best way to accomplish the objective. The present method provides the NSC and its subordinate organizations with access to a much broader field of informed judgment and expertise than is available from the Board of National Estimates alone. In addition, I am obviously more concerned than you are about the potential loss of objectivity resulting from the proposed transfer.

I hope that these thoughts will be helpful to you in making whatever changes in your article you believe are appropriate.

Sincerely,

Richard Helms
Director